

Wilsonia backhousei

COMMON NAME

Narrow-leaved wilsonia

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Convolvulaceae

AUTHORITY

Wilsonia backhousei Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser | Qualifiers: SO

2009 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser | Qualifiers: SO

2004 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand known only from the Waimea Estuary, Nelson where it was first discovered in 1993. Common in Australia where it is known from Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania.

HABITAT

A species of usually silty to muddy ground within estuaries, usually found growing just above the mean high tide mark in places which would be subjected to frequent salt-water immersion during storms or Spring/King tides.



Herbarium specimen AK 224608.

Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Herbarium specimen AK 224608 detail.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small procumbent subshrub forming dense patches up to 1 x 1 m. branches procumbent up to 150 mm tall, more or less glabrous. Leaves more or less succulent, sessile, 5-20 x 10-3 mm, glaucous to dark green, linear-lanceolate to linear-obovate, apex acute, base attenuate, glabrous. Flowers solitary; pedicels 0-1.5 mm long, calyx 5-7 mm long, tubular, teeth 5, triangular, 1/4 to 1/3 the length of tube, outer surface glabrous, inner pilose hairy; corolla 10 mm long, tubular white; 5-lobed, lobes 2-4 mm long, linear-ovate to linear-elliptic, acute; stamens 5, exserted, filaments attached 1-1.5 mm below throat; ovary 1-2-locular, style exserted, stigmas ovoid. Capsule c.3 mm long, obovoid, shorter than calyx, indehiscent (capsules rarely seen in New Zealand material). Seeds 1-2.

SIMILAR TAXA

None. Though the grey-green, succulent leaves mean that sterile plants could be confused with *Suaeda novae-zelandiae* Allan which grows in similar habitats. From *Suaeda*, *Wilsonia* differs by its more upright growth habit and solitary, white, tubular non-bracteolate rather than the compact green or red-green, bracteolate flowers of *Suaeda*.

FLOWERING

October - February

FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple

FRUITING

December - April (rarely produced in New Zealand)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from stem cuttings. However, requires a water logged soil in full sun to flourish. In good conditions inclined to become invasive.

THREATS

Not Threatened. Apparently a recent arrival (at least there are no records of it prior to 1993) which has successfully colonised the Waimea Estuary. It should probably no longer be regarded as a vagrant, despite the fact it rarely sets seed. For it spreads readily by asexual means.

ETYMOLOGY

wilsonia: Named after John Wilson, 18th century amateur botanist and author of *A Synopsis of British Plants*, published in 1744

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

Actively and aggressively spreading, this species may require management and control. It could be introduced. As far as is known all spread is vegetative, fruit being rarely (if ever) formed in New Zealand populations

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for the NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2006. Description by P.J. de Lange.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/wilsonia-backhousei/>